

Robert W. Olsen, Jefferson, NY.  
Re: P-2685-026

Dear Sir or Madam:

The installation of the New York Power Authority (NYPA) Blenheim-Gilboa (BG) Project in the New York State Towns of Blenheim and Gilboa has had a profound effect on those communities. The economies of the towns suffered the loss of tax base and viable functioning farms being lost. The BG Project also placed two potential hazards to the Hamlet of North Blenheim in immediate proximity. The safety of the upper and lower reservoirs is a matter of great concern. The 2011 flood underscores that concern. NYPA admits to concern that the dam could be overtopped, which could lead to dam failure. The attempt to reduce stress on the structure by raising the Tainter gates was plagued by problems. Power to the site was down. The generators failed to operate. Eventually, generated power was arranged and the gates raised. This success may well have resulted in a surge of water that devastated the hamlet of North Blenheim. Clearly, NYPA had not planned or prepared for such an event. The propensity of the Schoharie Creek for flooding is hardly a secret as it has been the subject of books.

In response to the devastation caused by the 2011 flood the residents of the Town of Blenheim formed the Blenheim Long Term Community Recovery Committee (BLTCRC). The group is staffed by volunteers and sanctioned by the Town Board. Among the goals of the Committee is the mitigation of flood damage and restoration and development of the Town's economic base. To that end the cooperation of NYPA in the form of hydrologic data they possessed was requested several times in writing. No data was forthcoming. Attempts to meet face to face with NYPA management have consistently been denied. It should be obvious that the Town of Blenheim would be hard pressed to finance the hydrologic study required to put in place the mitigation measures necessary to protect property and life. The Hamlet of North Blenheim is minutes from disaster should the NYPA earthen dam fail. One would think that simple humanitarian concerns would evoke a more compassionate response from NYPA.

The changing climate has resulted in increased precipitation in the area as a whole and the Schoharie drainage basin in particular. The hydrologic data used in designing the BG Project is seriously outdated. If the safety of the two earthen dams at the heart of the BG Project is to be assured, a new hydrologic study of the entire Schoharie watershed is essential. NYPA should contract such a study and share it with Town and County agencies. Expense may be pleaded by NYPA in this case. They stress their intense efforts to "buy low and sell high" in the attempt to remain viable. They neglect to mention that they are subsidized to the extent of over \$20K daily to simply be present and ready to provide power to the grid. While support for the grid is a worthy activity, the arrangement hardly induces financial pain.

Considering the history of the relationship between NYPA and its host communities, it could easily be asserted that the 50 year license NYPA enjoyed has fostered a level of arrogance. I must question whether NYPA is worthy of relicensing. If the license is granted it certainly should not for a 50 year period. A 25 year license should be the absolute maximum.

It is to be hoped that whatever entity is licensed to operate the BG Project is characterized by a culture that is capable and willing to lend support to its host communities.

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P. S. My mailing address is the result of the vagaries of postal deliveries.

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Bl enhei m does not serve my resi dence.